

I claim:

1. A system for remotely monitoring a machine having a status indicator light, comprising:

a sensor unit including at least one photosensor arranged to detect light emitted by the indicator light and a remote communications interface;

a receiver remotely situated relative to said sensor unit and arranged to receive signals generated by said sensor in response to detection of light emitted by said indicator light; and

a computing device arranged to interpret said signals in order to indicate a status of said machine.

2. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said remote communications interface includes a wireless transmitter, and said receiver is a wireless receiver.

3. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said receiver is arranged to receive signals from a plurality of said sensor units, each identifiable by a unique identifier.

4. A system as claimed in claim 3, wherein said receiver is connected to a network server.

5. A system as claimed in claim 4, wherein said server is connected to a local area network.
6. A system as claimed in claim 4, wherein said server is connected to the Internet.
7. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said sensor unit includes multiple photosensors for monitoring multiple machine status indicator lights.
8. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said photosensor is arranged to monitor a color of said indicator light.
9. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said photosensor is arranged to monitor an on/off condition of said indicator light.
10. Apparatus for enabling remote monitoring of a machine having a status indicator light, comprising:
 - at least one photosensor arranged to detect light emitted by the indicator light; and
 - a remote communications interface.

11. Apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said remote communications interface includes a wireless transmitter.
12. Apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said sensor unit includes multiple photosensors for monitoring multiple machine status indicator lights.
13. Apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said photosensor is arranged to monitor a color of said indicator light.
14. Apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said photosensor is arranged to monitor an on/off condition of said indicator light.
15. A method of remotely monitoring a machine, comprising the steps of:
 - detecting light emitted by a status indicator light on the machine;
 - transmitting signals representative of the detected light to a remote location; and
 - providing, at the remote location, an indication of the status of the machine based on the transmitted signals.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the step of transmitting signals comprises the step of wirelessly transmitting the signals.
17. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the step of transmitting signals further comprising the step of converting the signals into packets for transmission over the Internet.
18. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the step of detecting light comprises the step of detecting light from indicator lights on a plurality of machines, and wherein the step of transmitting signals comprises the step of transmitting signals from sensor units at the plurality of machines to a single centrally located receiver.
19. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the step of detecting light comprises the step of detecting light from multiple lights on a single machine.
20. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the step of detecting light comprises the step of detecting a color of said light.

21. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the step of detecting light comprises the step of detecting an on/off status of said indicator light.
22. Monitoring software for remotely monitoring a status of a machine comprising:
 - means for receiving data indicative of the status of at least one indicator light on at least one said machine;
 - means for definitions from a database and comparing the received data with the definitions; and
 - means for displaying a result of said comparison.
23. Monitoring software as claimed in claim 22, further comprising means for storing results of said comparison and later displaying said stored results as historical data.
24. Monitoring software as claimed in claim 22, further comprising means for calculating a run time based on said data and for comparing said run time with a maintenance schedule in order to generate maintenance reminders.
25. Monitoring software as claimed in claim 22, further comprising means for calculating a run time based on

said data and comparing said run time with labor records.

26. Monitoring software as claimed in claim 22, further comprising means for providing a warning to a user upon detection of an alert status of said indicator light.